THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

June/July 2020 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

Richer in Humanity

by Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap

Editor's Note: The following is excerpted from the 2020 Good Friday homily given at Saint Peter's Basilica with Pope Francis presiding. The complete text is at: www.Vaticannews.va.

The coronavirus pandemic of has abruptly roused us from the greatest danger individuals and humanity have always been susceptible to: the delusion of omnipotence. ...It took merely the smallest and most formless element of nature, a virus, to remind us that we are mortal, that military power and technology are not sufficient to save us. As a psalm in the Bible says, "**In his prime, man does not understand. / He is like the beasts—they perish**" (Psalm 49:21). How true that is!

...The other positive fruit of the present health crisis is the feeling of solidarity. When, in the memory of humanity, have the people of all nations ever felt themselves so united, so equal, so less in conflict than at this moment of pain? Never so much as now have we experienced the truth of the words of one of our great poets: "Peace, you peoples! Too deep is the mystery of the prostrate earth." We have forgotten about building walls. The virus knows no borders. In an instant it has broken down all the barriers and distinctions of race, nation, religion, wealth, and power. We should not revert to that prior time when this moment has passed. As the Holy Father has exhorted us, we should not waste this opportunity. Let us not allow so much pain, so many deaths, and so much heroic engagement on the part of health workers to have been in vain. Returning to the way things were is the "recession" we should fear the most.

"**They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again.**" (Isaiah 2:4)

This is the moment to put into practice something of the prophecy of Isaiah

whose fulfillment humanity has long been waiting for. Let us say, "Enough!" to the tragic race toward arms. Say it with all your might, you young people, because it is above all your destiny that is at stake. Let us devote the unlimited resources committed to weapons to the goals that we now realize are most necessary and urgent: health, hygiene, food, the fight against poverty, stewardship of creation. Let us leave to the next generation a world poorer in goods and money, if need be, but richer in its humanity.

(Continued on Page 2)

Little Less than Gods

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

Way back in the 1970's, my high school friends and I climbed New Hampshire's Mount Washington, the highest peak in the northeastern United States. Ferocious wind buffeted us at a high point on the Lion's Head Trail overlooking Tuckerman's Ravine. My friend, Briand Lessard, climbed atop a boulder with storm clouds as a backdrop, threw up his arms, and bellowed, "What is man that you are mindful of him? Mortal man that you should care for him? And yet, you have made us little less than gods!" Briand's take on Psalm 8, in that stunning location, exhilarated me, as the memory still does.

My friend's theatrics came to mind this morning when a nun read Psalm 8 during Pope Francis' televised morning Mass. All of the power, confidence, gratitude, and hope of those words flooded my heart, despite having just read an issue of *The New York Times* that did not have a single optimistic article. Even though we still had a formidable climb ahead of us before the summit, Briand proclaimed his faith that we would get it done spectacularly.

This kind of faith is exactly what we need now. Like a category 5 hurricane, COVID-19 demolishes the security of a predictable future. Like Mount Washington, which presents multiple false summits to tease climbers in the rock-strewn emptiness above the tree-line, the pandemic refuses to be dismissed easily, as we have come to believe all crises should in the face of the brilliance of modern technology.

To make matters worse, while the coronavirus captured the headlines,

(Continued on Page 2)

Richer

(Continued from Page 1)

..."**After three days I will rise**", Jesus had foretold (Matthew 27:63). We too, after these days that we hope will be short, shall rise and come out of the tombs of our homes. Not, however, to return to the former life like Lazarus, but to a new life, like Jesus. A more fraternal, more human, more Christian life! Ω

Little Less

(Continued from Page 1)

President Trump reversed higher fuel-efficiency requirements for vehicles. The Environmental Protection Agency relaxed reporting and waved fines for water and air polluters, refused to tighten regulation on industrial soot emissions, despite studies that link those emissions to higher COVID-19 lethality, and then eased rules on mercury emissions from power plants.

Meanwhile, a report, buried on page 10 of the April 16 edition of *The New York Times*, concludes that climate change "could result in a more abrupt collapse of many animal species, starting in the next decade if greenhouse gas emissions are not reduced.... The latest research adds to an already bleak picture for the world's wildlife unless urgent action is taken to preserve habitats and limit climate change." Like the medical researchers who warned of an inevitable pandemic for decades and then begged for global action on COVID-19 as early as December 2019, experts regularly warn that we are charging headlong over a cliff unless we drastically reduce carbon.

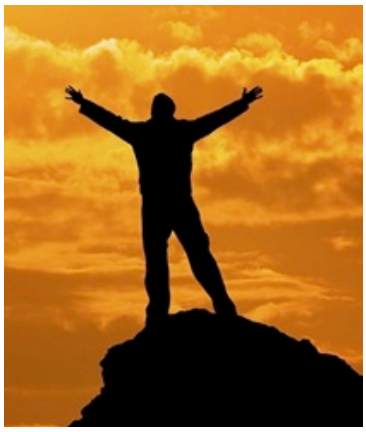
Prior to the pandemic, even progressive governments merely tinkered with the climate emergency, prompting Greta Thunberg to scowl at their timidity, while fossil-fuel lackeys floored the gas pedal toward catastrophe. The prospect of reducing carbon emissions in the short time available to stop the worst aspects of climate change appeared hopeless.

But now, with disease in the air outside and often inside everyone's door, we've reduced an unprecedented amount of air, sea, and land travel. So many gardens are being planted that seeds are now hard to come by. Dramatic reductions in air pollution can be seen from the ground in cities like New Delhi and also from outer space. People are cheering from balconies and doorsteps for healthcare and grocery store workers. We are witnessing just how much the human community can transform itself at record speed when it understands the urgency.

And so, in the midst of this pandemic, the Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker is moving ahead with plans to eschew fossil fuels by replacing our gas stove and heating system with high-efficiency electric heat pumps. When finished, all our power will come from our rooftop solar panels or green-sourced electricity. The change will be difficult, but, like mountain climbing, the rewards outweigh the sacrifice.

New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman says America can rise again after the pandemic by investing in "more cheap, domestically-produced, low and even zero-carbon energy"... to "accelerate our clean energy transition" and say goodbye to "petro-dictators." "We've got some momentum," Friedman says,"let's pile on."

On April 19, in a two-page editorial entitled "The America We Need," the *NY Times* details grotesque economic injustice over the past 45 years that is glaringly exposed by the pandemic. The editors cite "the imperative to slow global warming" and then conclude, "The United States has a chance to emerge from this latest crisis as a stronger nation, more just, more free and resilient. We must seize the opportunity."



And so, as tired as we might be, more of us can inspire others as Briand Lessard did on Mount Washington. Let us never forget that, with the love of God, nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37). The remarkably creative, compassionate, and ecological response to COVID-19, so far, proves the psalmist correct: "You have made us little less than gods." Ω

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52 Mason Street, Worcester, MA 01610 Telephone: (508) 753-3588, 753-3089
Email:theresecw2@gmail.com

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Warheads to Windmills

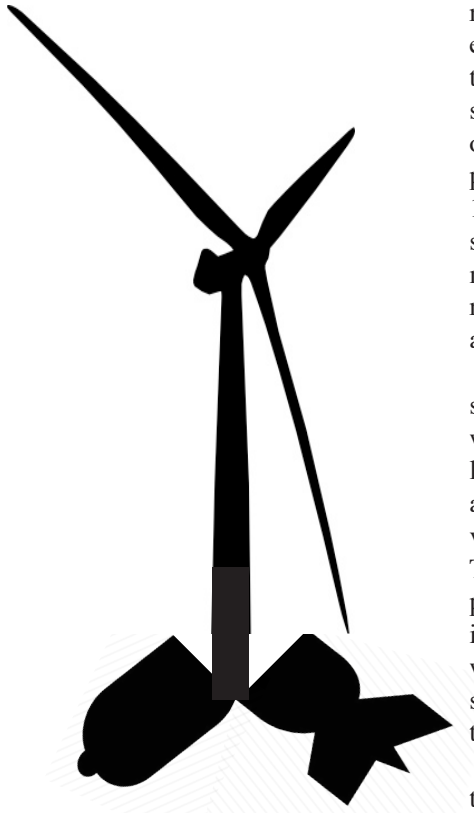
by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

Life is never static. To be alive necessitates conversions and adaptations. Some are grace-filled, others imposed upon us. The global pandemic of COVID-19 is an obvious example of the latter. Its emergence brought rapid and drastic changes in human arrangement that few of us could have imagined or thought possible. Governments spent trillions of dollars on economic relief, imposed new rules and regulations, and redeployed industries and workers. Personal sacrifice became part of the public discourse, all for the purpose of saving human life.

The existential threats of the climate crisis and nuclear war require a similarly comprehensive conversion says Timmon Wallis, author of the report *Warheads to Windmills*. Wallis, who holds a PhD in Peace Studies, and Vicki Elson are co-founders of NuclearBanUS, a non-profit organization "committed to the full elimination of nuclear weapons and the use of all those wasted human, financial, and political resources to addressing the climate crisis and global inequity through a Green New Deal." Warhead to Windmills is both their blueprint and campaign for that transformation. The two provided highlights during a recent webinar, giving details on what it would take to simultaneously mitigate global warming and prevent nuclear war.

According to the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), flattening the curve on the climate crisis requires preventing a rise in the earth's temperature above one and a half degrees Celsius. To facilitate that trend, the IPCC says the US needs to reduce its carbon emissions from 5.7 billion tons per year — our net total — to approximately three billion tons by 2030 and zero by 2050.

The swiftest way to achieve those targets, says Wallis, is to cut emissions from transportation and electricity generation. The United States currently has 270 million cars on the road with 17 million sold new each year, of these only 360,000 are electric vehicles (EVs). Wallis' report recommends



incrementally decreasing production of gas vehicles and increasing production of EVs to 17 million annually by 2030. That transition would reduce emissions from transportation by one third. Ramping up sourcing for electiricty from 20% — current total—to 100% renewables within the next decade would cut emissions from electricity generation to zero.

There is no "flattening the curve" on nuclear weapon, for the threat they pose has no acceptable level of risk. A 2007 study cited in *Warheads to Windmills* estimates that the dropping of only one nuclear bomb on New York City would instantly kill upwards to one million people and afflict 300,000 more with third degree burns. Elson says the number of burn beds needed to treat all those inflamed bodies is about 200 times the number of burn beds in the entire United States.

For all its horror, nuclear war is the easier of the two threats to avert, according to Wallis. While slowing climate change requires a massive conversion of resource —government incentives, new laws and regulations, re-purposing of industry and expertise, and yes, personal sacrifice — the path to dismantling nuclear weapons simply lies in political will. The UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons provides the tool for creating that path. 122 states have adopted the treaty, 81 are signatories, and 36 have ratified which means they recognize the document's requirements as legally binding rather than aspirational.

The skeptics and despairing (I sometimes count myself in that group) will note that no nuclear state is on this list. Certainly not our own beleaguered and weapons-addicted homeland. But that void could become increasingly irrelevant. The Nuclear Ban Treaty contains strong prohibitions against providing assistance in the production of nuclear weapons which could restrain arms manufacturers, some of whom have contracts in countries that have signed or ratified the treaty.

"So even if the US never signs the treaty, the companies that make US nuclear weapons are already being affected by it," says Elson who notes that large pension funds like Norwegian Sovereign and ABP in the Netherlands have divested from nuclear weapons with more pension funds following suit.

Money moves many a mountain, so too law. In addition to promoting boycott and divestment campaigns for fossil fuel and nuclear weapons, Wallis and Elson advocate specific legislative actions (please ask your US Represententative to support HR 2419). Their seventy-page report can be read online. It's visionary and practical, demonstrating how we can indeed implement a Green New Deal if we convert resources for nuclear war into resources for sustaining the planet. Of course, this requires massive global cooperation and overhaul of national commitment, but change is a fact of life. And, in this instance, vital. Ω

Editor's Note: for more information on the Warheads to Windmills Campaign, please visit: http://www.nuclearban.us/w2w/.

Catholic Workers Cope with Covid-19

Virginia Maksymowicz/Fritz Eichenberg

Hello!
We have moved from welcoming people into the cafe in the morning for breakfast, clothing, showers, coffee, phone use, mail, etc. to handing out grab 'n' go meals for about seventy people four times a week. We bring out the produce cart for people to fill bags for the days we are closed. We used to offer twenty showers a day, but now have gone down to ten a day. We invite one person in at a time, start with temperature taking and hand washing before someone can shop for clothes. In between each person, we bleach down the shower and let it sit for ten minutes. This has, obviously, slowed things down.

We find we are more exhausted because we are hypervigilant in following this protocol. We have very few volunteers. We know our homeless friends are more vulnerable when people with resources and mobility come to Cherith Brook from various places. We are tired but very thankful for resources to share and a place to welcome our friends. We are so humbled and appreciative for the generosity of people who have given lunch items and finances to continue our hospitality and welcome! Peace to you,

Jodi, Eric and Micah
Cherith Brook Catholic Worker
Kansas City, Missouri

I am appalled and amazed and broken by all the 'angst,' and all the measures fear creates and the extraordinary sanctions to enforce the measures, both in society and the community.

Of course, we should slow down the spread of the virus, but at what cost?

People with symptoms have to stay in their rooms. We cannot know for sure if it is corona because there are no tests for people with only normal fever. When they no longer have symptoms, people are allowed back into the community. Pretty darn tough. Prison is less hard, with air, recreation, company. I was isolated for 15 days. The hard thing for me is not the isolation. But that it is forced.

Anonymous Catholic Worker

Dear Claire & Scott,
Beginning in mid-March, as COVID-19 began infecting large numbers of people in NYC, we here at Maryhouse and Saint Joe's scrambled to respond. The first order of business was to protect the 20+ people living in each of our houses, many of whom are older, some medically vulnerable. In a matter of days, hand sanitizer dispensers were on every floor and spray bottles of disinfectant in every bathroom, and we talked with each other about the importance of hand washing and disinfecting surfaces, isolating, and distancing. In discussions of what to do, opinions ranged from completely shutting the houses to embracing the spirit of Saint Francis hugging the leper. A middle ground was found.

At Saint Joseph House, the soup line, which had been feeding 120 to 150 people a day, was converted to hand out bag lunches of sandwiches, soup, coffee, and a snack in front of the house to a line of approximately 250. The lunches disappeared in less than a half hour. For safety reasons, we closed the house to all but a few volunteers. Maryhouse provided dinner cooks every afternoon, prepared in Saint Joe's kitchen for both houses. Maryhouse also offered bag lunches to a smaller number of people at noon, and continued to provide showers for women in the morning. Masses and Friday Night Meetings were cancelled.

Our donations of produce and sliced bread disappeared as the volunteers from New Jersey were no longer able to procure and deliver them. As most Catholic Workers know, however, one of the great joys of living this life is witnessing the inspiring kindness and generosity of other people. Donations flooded in, from sandwiches and snacks to fruit and needed supplies, and they continue to arrive. At a time when so many people struggle with isolation and boredom, we have community and good work to do. Though we have friends who contracted the virus, most have recovered, and we are exceedingly grateful that no one in our houses, miraculously perhaps, has exhibited symptoms. We are blessed.

Jim Reagan
Saint Joseph's Catholic Worker
New York, New York

Dear Scott,
Hope you're all doing well in this. We're all still in good health. At Cana Soup Kitchen, we managed to give out soup for two weeks outside, but then decided to close down, mainly to protect our volunteers, who are mostly elderly and/or have fragile health. We supported a Catholic Charity who runs a daily soup line (the Maltesians) with Easter sweets for the guests, and use the time to do needed repair work at the Cana Kitchen.

Also we cancelled this year's European CW Gathering at Pentecost in Dülmen. We hope we can come together later this year.

You're in our thoughts and prayers. Greetings and love to Claire and everyone around!

Bernd Büscher
Catholic Worker
Dortmund, Germany

Greetings, Scott, Claire, and whanau [Māori for extended family],
Just thinking of you as I was bottling my small crop of beetroot this afternoon. Just a few jars. We in NZ are all on 30-day lock-down, with everyone confined to a 'bubble,' a family, a small group, a single person (me), who are committed to not sharing life with anyone outside their bubble. It seems to be working OK.

I've done heaps of reading, praying, ringing-around, and pottering about. Over 70s, like me, are urged not to go outside away from their homes except to the supermarket or doctor/chemist.

Experts here are predicting a loss of between 14 – 20, 000 lives of the most vulnerable if we don't stop the virus in its tracks. Self-isolation is the key policy for that. Bottling seems a good option to that!

Love and blessings to you all,

Jim Consedine
Catholic Worker
Christchurch, New Zealand

Hi, Scott,
COVID-19 has changed a lot about the daily life and work patterns of the Los Angeles Catholic Worker.

We have a soup kitchen on Skid Row, and also provide hospitality to (mostly elderly) long-term guests at our community house. To continue running the kitchen while also providing a safer environment for our guests, we decided to temporarily split into two work "teams." One team is living in-house with the guests and continuing to run that household in a more isolated way. Another team is living in separate parts of our buildings and continuing to go back and forth to the soup kitchen every day. This new household set-up is, happily, accommodated by our buildings, but also facilitated by some creativity. One community member now enters and exits his bedroom via a ladder at his window, for example, to leave the rest of that building safer for the use of his elderly housemate.

The soup kitchen has been busier than ever, serving vastly increased quantities of food, and doing all this with a fraction of the usual volunteers. We added "prep days" on non-serving days to get all of the work done. We found ways to discourage folks from forming long lines and are serving take-out **o**nly.

The household team is continuing with the cooking, cleaning, and social work, while sticking close to home. The teams meet every week to talk about our common work, over the phone or through physically-distanced backyard meetings on adjacent outdoor staircases. Communication is important, and having split into two households, it's extra work to support each other.

We are limiting our movements and contacts with people, in order to protect the vulnerable folks with whom we live, and in order to stay healthy ourselves so that we can keep providing our services for as long as possible and, crucially, in order to do our part as much as possible to protect

people in the Skid Row community, who would be so seriously affected by any contact with the virus there.

We have experienced having to make lots of trade-offs and less-than-perfect decisions in order to continue various parts of our work. We have experienced anxiety over the changing situation, over not doing everything we would like to do, and over the new dangers that people are facing. We are working to find a balance between a sober understanding of the situation and an outlook that still allows for creativity and joy. We are working to find new intra- and inter-personal balances as our normal patterns are disrupted. We are still working to figure out what activism, spirituality, courage, and compassion mean and look like during this time, and that will probably be a long learning process. Please pray for us and let us know if you have any advice.

Sarah Fuller
Catholic Worker
Los Angeles, California

Hi Scott,
The Catholic Worker Free Clinic in Philly is running four clinic sessions per week with a skeleton crew of volunteers. We have modified medical care with people being screened at the door for their medical history and having their temperature taken. The waiting area is now outside. Two bathrooms are available, the lending library, phone, socks, toiletries and of course, the shower. We have had an outpouring of concern and support including a donation of handmade masks. We have given out at least 400 masks to our patients and will continue the distribution of masks. We are spending a lot of time educating the patients about the virus and trying to help people understand the importance of social distancing and wearing masks while allaying fears and trying to bring some dignity and compassion to the patients during this difficult time.

Kay Lasante Clinic in Port au Prince, Haiti has, unfortunately, been broken into twice. All of the recently purchased PPE was stolen, as well as the generator and many other supplies. While new supplies were gathered and security measures were being put in place, the staff has been going to various encampments and out on the streets doing education and community outreach about COVID-19. They never cease to amaze us with their ability to adapt and make the most of challenging situations. The clinic has reopened while maintaining social distance. We would appreciate any support you can give Kay Lasante at this time.

Our House of Hospitality has three guests who are seeking asylum and who have been released from immigration detention centers.

Johanna Berrigan & MaryBeth Appel
House of Grace Catholic Worker
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Hi, Scott,

Since the pandemic shut everything down, conversation is a bit lacking with our guests, without any sport to talk about. One of the men turns out to be a tennis fanatic, as well a Liverpool fan.

Stay well!

Martin Newell
Austin Smith House
Birmingham, England

Letters

To the Community,
What is it like to have COVID-19? The call with results produced waves of emotion, possibly worse than the illness itself. Immediately, my head pounded to the beat of my heart. In panic, I hoped an ambulance was waiting outside my door. First, I told my husband and went into seclusion in the guest room. Then I notified friends and family and waited for my doctor and public health to call.

Questions swirled. Would I be whisked away, never to see family members again? How soon would I need a ventilator? Luckily, I did not. A terrible bout with bronchitis weeks before had been my difficult stage. Antibiotics and over-the-counter medication resolved it, but I still had the nagging dry cough, fatigue, fevers, and shortness of breath that typify COVID-19. This has dragged on for six weeks. Until I have two days in a row with no symptoms, I must stay in seclusion. I am helpless and lonely, and my existence is only made livable by virtual expressions of love, prayers, and kindness from friends and family. This is no common cold. Even the mild form is miserable. No one deserves to suffer it. And no one is an expendable member of society as some have suggested, including our president and his followers.

Americans have suffered needlessly during the coronavirus pandemic under the failed leadership of President Trump, who refuses to recognize that COVID-19 is a global crisis, not a regional one. Consequently, state by state, region by region, city by city have come to realize they are on their own fighting the widespread fallout. Although warnings were issued loud and clear around the world to avoid community spread, to test and track cases, to prepare for the dreaded surge, and to buckle down for an indefinite period of sheltering in place, President Trump consistently peddled false assurances, platitudes, misinformation, and downright lies, and failed to act to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the American people. This is the President's number one job, and he let us down abysmally.

A wiser leader would have mobilized the Department of Defense to organize the logistics of inventorying assets needed in health care, food, and public safety to prepare for the inevitable. The Department of Agriculture could have identified the key reserves of food products, and the Department of Transportation could have mapped out distribution streams, avoiding catastrophic shortages and hoarding frenzies. Health and Human Services could have assessed and prepared for the various forms of medical and temporary assistance that would be needed in hard-hit communities, avoiding needless death and heartache. The Department of Commerce could have identified where additional assets could be manufactured within our boundaries or purchased without. The Government Accounting Office could have requested manufacturing bids for personal protective equipment, testing kits, testing labs, ventilators, and countless other supplies, avoiding the mad free-for-all bidding war that pitted states against each other, foreign agencies, and even their own government, and drove costs skyward. At the very least, FEMA could have been granted power much sooner to oversee such tasks on a national level.

It isn't too late for our President to step down off his pedestal and empower qualified people to effectively prevent further spread. Instead of partisan blustering, boasting, and begging for praise, he could honor his oath of office and lead the country, not just those who blindly salute him because he tugs at their nationalist and libertarian ideals. Instead of brazenly confronting a virus with chants of "Make America Great Again," he could allow his executive staff to manage the current crisis and draw a picture of post-viral life. Instead, our states had to resort to forming independent coalitions to fill the void in government action which was stifled by Trump's haughty diatribes.

Despite failed leadership and widely disseminated conspiracy theories about coronavirus, the simple truth is the virus has no party or religious preference, and it has no respect for political boundaries. It is a parasite seeking a host and travels wherever people take it. We citizens can take steps to save our neighbors. Wash your hands. Avoid touching your face. Maintain social distancing. Cover your face whenever you are outside your home. Everywhere. Walking your dog, taking a run around the block, making a dash for food or medicine. Coronavirus particles are suspended in the air and follow you on a gentle breeze. Don't become a statistic like me. Cover up. And pray.

Pray for a swift end to this horrific disease. Pray for caregivers and service providers who keep us strong and well. Pray for those fighting COVID-19 and for their loved ones who cannot be at their side. Pray for the souls who have lost their battle with this disease. Most importantly, pray for wisdom and guidance from competent leaders.

Christine Zerillo
Bloomfield, Connecticut

HAPPY EASTER!
...Isn't this virus sickness thing something? Guessing you are staying in most of the time. My brother, in San Diego, says he is home alone with the dog and cats! Going out only for food, doctor, etc. His wife is in a nursing home. Now they won't let him visit her. He doesn't seem too happy about it!!

Thank you for the latest newsletter and for using my "story." Many don't understand the hardships of prison (or care).

They moved "most" of the over-6o group to this building, kind of a "useless" move, as we are still mixed with the under 60 inmates and not all over-60 were moved... No visits, education, classes, groups, chapel, etc. No library or books checked out. One building at a time for chowhall, so it moves slow! Sitting every other table. We get out for yard two hours a day, one building at a time. Seems a lot of guys have a lot of stored up energy, don't know what to do with themselves. Hopefully, it won't lead to more violence and negatives.

The chowhall workers, inmates, are still mixing with us all, so if one gets this virus-sickness, we will all get it anyway! Why separate some inmates, if they are not really separated?

Take care and enjoy your day.

Clifford Smith
Avenal State Prison, California

Dear Claire and Scott,
I'm surrounded by saints here. New Orleans has been hit very badly, and everyone is rallying together to help. I think the prevalenceof COVID-19 is less due to Mardi Gras and more a culture that celebrates togetherness and has multiple health problems and poverty. I have no doubt that any support you give will be greatly valued by any healthcare workers.... You're always in my prayers.

Beth Caillouett Arredondo, MD
Madisonville, Louisiana

Dear Claire,
Peace! Such insane times we are living in! After much deliberation, I stepped down as the leader of the Ali Forney Center on Feb 29th, just a few days before the madness struck NYC. I am grateful to be holed up upstate, as Raymond was diagnosed with emphysema last year and is at higher risk from COVID-19. So aside from a once weekly, nerve-frought trip to the supermarket, and isolated dashes to the post office, I am not leaving our confinement. (I'm grateful for my incarcerations, which put this in perspective!)

I am quite worried about you and Scott. This seems like such a vulnerable time to be offering hospitality, though of course the need is more crucial than ever. I am glad the Ali Forney Center has been able to stay open (about half the homeless youth housing sites in NYC shut down after staff were refusing to come to work!) I hope you are keeping as safe as possible. There are so far about two thousand confirmed cases in Orange County, where we live, which is disconcerting. Of course NYC is now the global epicenter, so I guess anywhere in commuting distance will be inundated with infection.

O well, All Is Grace, even when the grace comes with a ferocious mask. I was impressed by what Pope Francis said about a week ago, how we have imagined the whole world could be sick from ecological ravaging and economic injustice, and yet we imagine we can keep ourselves separate from the suffering. Not now, that's for sure.

Carl Siciliano
Cuddebackville, New York

Should We Wear Masks?

When workers at the entrance to our neighborhood grocery store asked customers to please wear a mask while shopping, some of them replied, "Go f--- yourself!" It took Stillwater, Oklahoma only three hours of hostile abuse to drop its mandate for face coverings. On May 1, a security guard at a Family Dollar store in Flint, Michigan, who insisted that a customer wear a mask, was shot dead.

Supported by white supremacists, who are delighted that COVID-19 is taking more black and brown lives, libertarians and others, some of them toting guns, are demonstrating for the immediate end to all pandemic restrictions. In defiance of Massachusetts's prohibition on gatherings of more than ten people, a Baptist pastor in Worcester continues to hold services. On May 3, he emerged from church waving an American flag, not wearing a mask, and shouted, "It should be no surprise that all across the land they're shutting the churches down, but they are leaving everything else open without restriction."

A non-mask-wearing church attendee, who called Governor Gavin Newson to reopen California, said, "It's not like I'm hugging people and kissing them or anything like that."

The Catholic Worker, undergirded as it is by a personalist belief that the most enduring change is freely embraced rather than compelled under threat, nonetheless sometimes finds its values congruent with those of the state. Although many people insisted it was an affront to liberty, like the overwhelming majority of Americans, we have come to support the insistence that those riding in cars should wear seat belts. In the current pandemic, medical experts have proven that COVID-19 is a great many times more contagious than flu and that it can be transmitted by symptom-free carriers at distances up to ten feet. Wearing a mask dramatically reduces the risk of infection to others. Refusing to wear one and gathering in large groups endanger the lives of others.

That the social and economic restrictions pose difficulty does not justify lifting them before it is medically safe to do so. To suggest that health restrictions represent totalitarianism empowers conspiracy theorists and confuses liberty with licentiousness. We would do better to turn our pent up energy toward encouraging and supporting each other no matter how long the pandemic lasts. It took ten years to end the Great Depression. It took the Jewish people forty years to reach the Promised Land. It took women a hundred years to win the right to vote. Resorting to violence and disregarding prudent health measures after less than two months is beneath us all. Thank God, most people are doing much better. Ω

Catholic Worker Calendar

June 10 & 24 , July 7 & 23—Pandemic Prayer: Weather permitting, join us at evening prayer and Taize chant in our backyard with suitably-distanced chairs and face masks. 6:30. P.M. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow.

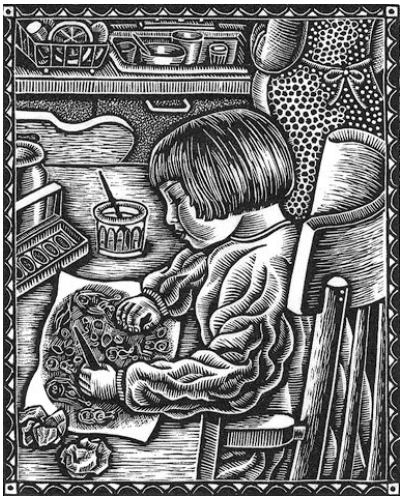
Mason Street Musings

As I near my 62nd birthday, I find myself more prone to pontification on just about every topic, but the uncertainty of the future in the time of coronavirus is humbling. I could easily put things into print that I'd be embarasseed about later on, so I'm relying on advisers whom I respect and admire: my three oldest grandchildren, three-year-old Theo, three-and-a-half-year-old Frances, and six-year-old May.

Having listened to countless adult comentators lately, I'm glad to give voice to some of those who will inherit the earth.

When I telephoned to ask them how they felt, each one replied, "Good," but when I asked what they missed most right now, May said, "I miss my friends and family." Frances echoed May: "I miss playing with our friends." Theo said, "I wish I could go close to people."

When I asked what gave them joy now, Theo said, "I like to play with my mom and dad and sister, who gets herself messy." May said, "I like riding my bike more," and Frances gushed, "I like



Beth Krommes

sending mail and decorating our car for Mary Hart's 18th birthday."

When asked what he wished adults would do, Theo said "I want grown ups to play games." When asked what he would do as an adult, Theo said, "I'll talk a little different when I'm a grown up. I must get taller so I can wear glasses like my dad."

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Frances said, "I'm training for the Boston Marathon. I'm running pretty far. May is my coach."

May said, "I want to be a teacher when I grow up because I like teaching Frances and I want to teach more kids."

Then I got heavy and asked, "How can adults make the world better?" Without hesitation, Theo said. "I think we have to grow some trees." May suggested that adults "pick up more trash" and Frances opined, "The adults should share candy."

There you have it: Grow trees, pick up trash, and share candy. I took seven college courses in philosophy and couldn't have said it better. Riding bikes, playing with mom, dad, sisters, brothers, and friends, playing games, wearing our father's glasses, running, and getting close to people. Beats the heck out of figting wars, buying junk, or profiteering.

But can humanity wait until children take the reigns from us? I have good news on that front too. When I asked Frances when she'd be a grown up, she said, "When I'm eleven." Ω **Scott**

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